

Exercising This Summer

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By

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Summer is a wonderful time to enjoy the great outdoors. The birds are singing, the flowers are in full bloom, and the warm weather and bright sunshine can really lift one's mood. Summer is also a great time of year to start exercising.

When it's cold and dreary out, it can be difficult to get motivated to get in shape. But when the weather turns warmer, the outside world starts looking more attractive. Taking a walk and enjoying the sights and smells of the season is a popular activity. Letting it become a habit is good for your health.

Whether you walk, jog, or participate in other physical activities, summer is a great time to start getting in shape. The beautiful weather makes it easier to stick with an exercise regimen, and once you've made it a part of your routine, it will be easier to continue it once fall and winter roll back around. In this report, we'll highlight some ways to make the most of your summer workouts.

Best Summer Exercises

Some people prefer to work out in a gym. The environment provides a certain amount of structure, and it helps some of us stay motivated. But for those who do not do well in that type of environment, starting a workout in the summer is particularly beneficial. The weather makes it possible to work out without being confined to the indoors.

There are lots of activities we can enjoy in the summer that will help us get in shape. Here are a few of the best summer exercises and sports:

- Walking - Walking is not especially strenuous, but it has lots of benefits. It's great for those who cannot participate in high-impact exercise due to health

considerations. It's also good for those who haven't exercised in a long time or are really out of shape. They can start out walking short distances at a comfortable pace, then work progressively harder to get their hearts pumping.

- Jogging - A step above walking, jogging is a little higher in impact. It really gets our hearts pumping and makes us sweat. The best time to jog is early in the morning or late in the evening, when it's not as hot as it would be in the late morning and afternoon hours.
- Tennis - Playing tennis is a fun way to socialize, and it provides a good workout. Finding a regular opponent can help you both stay motivated.
- Basketball - Many parks have outdoor basketball courts. Getting a team together and setting regular times for games is a great way to give yourself incentive to exercise regularly.
- Rowing - Going to the lake is a favorite summer activity of many. Why not take a rowboat and get some exercise in while you're at it? Rowing gives your upper body a fantastic workout.
- Bicycling - Riding a bicycle in the summer is an economical way to get where you're going. It also provides a nice opportunity to see the sights of the season, as well as an awesome cardiovascular workout.

The best exercises for you will depend on your specific objectives. If you want to lose weight or improve overall health, an aerobic workout is what you need. This can be accomplished through sports that require lots of running, an aerobics class, or anything else that gets the heart rate up. If you want to build strength or muscle tone, weightlifting, yoga, or exercises that target specific muscles might be better for you.

With the exception of snow and ice sports, there aren't really any exercises that you can't do in the summer. These suggestions are simply meant to get you started. Finding activities that you enjoy participating in during warm weather will help keep you motivated to exercise, and staying motivated is one of the most important factors to your success.

Hitting the Pool

Lounging by the pool is a popular summer activity. But there's much more to do there than lounging. The pool is a great place to get some exercise.

One of the best things about exercising in water is that it keeps you cool. On hot days, there's nothing like taking a dip in some nice, cool water. Workouts that would normally make you all hot and sweaty don't do so in the pool, yet they still get your heart pumping and work your muscles.

Swimming is the first activity that comes to mind when it comes to exercising at the pool. And it is a good one. Swimming works almost every single muscle in your body. The resistance provided by the water adds to the toning benefits, and a fast-paced swim can really get your heart rate up.

Swimming isn't the only thing you can do in the pool, though. Water aerobics are quite popular these days, particularly for pregnant women and people with arthritis and other joint problems. It provides the same benefits as regular aerobics, but it is very low-impact.

Going to the lake or beach also gives us plenty of exercise options. Surfing is great for building balance and core strength. Taking a ride on a rowboat or paddleboat can provide a workout as well. Even jet skiing can build a surprising amount of strength.

For water lovers, workouts that incorporate going to the pool, lake or beach are ideal. Being able to get a workout while spending time at a favorite place provides lots of added motivation. And for those who aren't crazy about the water, the benefits of water exercise can give them incentive to become acquainted with it. There's no harm in starting out in the kiddie pool if you're more comfortable there.

Hiking Safety

Hiking is a favorite summer activity of nature lovers, and it's good exercise too. But there are some safety issues that it's important to keep in mind when hiking. These include the following:

- Ticks and insects can spread dangerous diseases, and some spiders are poisonous. Wearing long pants tucked into socks will help keep crawling critters off of you. Insect repellents are good for keeping all types of bugs away.
- Take plenty of clean water, some food, waterproof matches, and first aid supplies with you. You never know what could happen, so it is best to be prepared.
- Pack extra clothing and rain gear. You probably checked the weather report before setting out, but storms and inclement weather can come out of nowhere.
- Don't go hiking alone, especially if it will be a long hike or you are in unfamiliar territory. It's much safer to have someone with you in the event that one of you is injured or other unexpected problems arise.
- Tell someone where you're going and how long you plan to be gone. If you're not back when you planned to be, they will know where to look for you.
- Have some means of communication with the civilized world. A cell phone is good, but in remote areas you may not be able to get a signal. A walkie-talkie might be helpful, and in an emergency, smoke signals can draw attention to you.

Hiking is a simple pleasure that allows us to enjoy nature while keeping our bodies in great shape. But it's important to remember that nature harbors some dangers. Being prepared when you hit the woods will allow you to have a great time while knowing that you have everything you need in case the unexpected happens.

Staying Hydrated

When you're exercising in the summer, you will almost certainly sweat a lot. This is the body's way of cooling itself off, and it's normal. It can even help us lose weight. But it also means we're losing water. If we don't replace it, we could become dehydrated.

That's why it's so important to drink plenty of water in the summer, especially when we're exercising. Becoming dehydrated increases our risk of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Here are some tips for staying hydrated during summer workouts:

- Stay away from caffeinated, carbonated and alcoholic beverages. They are very dehydrating.
- Drink plenty of water every day. While there is some debate over whether we really need eight glasses, it is a good idea to drink at least a few glasses of water each day even if you're not exercising. It helps wash toxins out of your system and aids in building new cells, and it will keep you from being dehydrated when you start working out.
- Always keep water nearby when you're working out. Drink it throughout your workout, even if you are not thirsty. A good rule of thumb is 16 ounces an hour when you're doing an intense workout in hot weather.
- If you're participating in really strenuous activity, or you work out for more than an hour at a time, drink a sports drink with a good electrolyte balance. This will replace the sodium and other vital nutrients that you lose through heavy sweating.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables. These are good for you in a number of ways, one of which is keeping you hydrated.
- If you're not sure whether or not you're getting enough water, check your urine. If it's dark in color, you need to drink more.

Hydration is always important to your health, but it becomes even more crucial when you're working up a sweat. Watching your water intake is essential. While it is possible to drink too much water, it is hard to do when you're exercising in the summer heat. So keep the water handy, and drink it liberally.

Protecting Yourself From the Sun

Protecting our skin is very important when we're exercising outdoors. Sunburns can really put a damper on our workout efforts, and they can cause premature aging and skin cancer. But they are entirely preventable with a small amount of planning. Here are some tips:

- Stay in the shade when possible. Not only will this protect you from the sun, it will also keep you from getting so hot.
- Wear a good sweatproof sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. It only takes a few minutes to put it on before you go out, and it keeps you from having to worry about getting burned.
- Make sure you're completely covered. Areas that are often forgotten or not covered well when it comes to sunscreen include the ears, neck, and the portion of the scalp that is exposed by the part of your hair. Our lips need sunscreen too, so invest in a good lip balm or lipstick with sun protection in it.
- Don't underestimate the power of the sun. Being out for as little as 30 minutes without sunscreen can produce a burn, especially if you have fair skin. It's better to be safe than sorry.
- Be sure to wear sunscreen when you're in the water. You might not be able to feel a burn as easily there, but it's actually easier to get burned. The water reflects the sun onto your skin, intensifying its effects.

Getting a small amount of sun each day is good for us, because it causes our bodies to produce vitamin D. But too much sun will cause a sunburn, which is the result of our skin's natural defenses against damage from solar rays. It is unsightly, painful, and potentially dangerous. Protecting our skin from the sun is easy, and it can make our summer much more enjoyable.

Dress for Success

Dressing appropriately is very important when it comes to working out in the summer.

Here are some tips for deciding what to wear when exercising:

- Wear clothes that are lightweight and fit loosely. Not only will you be more comfortable, you'll also stay cooler. Synthetic blends that are designed for working out are best, because they draw moisture away from the body.
- Stick with light colors. There's a reason that summer fashions are usually not dark-colored. Black and other dark colors absorb light, and hence absorb heat. Lighter colors will keep you much cooler.
- Wear a hat. Hats will keep the sun off of your face, preventing sunburn and keeping you cooler.
- Invest in some good workout shoes. Your old, beat up sneakers might be fine for running errands, but when it comes to working out you need something that provides plenty of comfort and support.

Wearing the right clothes is more important than you might think. The way we dress when working out can help prevent heat exhaustion and sunburn, and it keeps us comfortable enough to continue our workout. So do yourself a favor and choose your exercise attire based on functionality first, and style second.

Avoiding Heat Exhaustion

Hot weather can be dangerous at times. When the heat is sweltering, it is important to use caution when exercising. If you're not careful, you could end up with a case of heat exhaustion.

Heat exhaustion is caused by extreme heat and dehydration. If untreated, it can lead to heat stroke, a potentially life-threatening condition. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, weakness, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, and fainting.

Heat exhaustion is most common in the very young, the elderly, and those in poor overall health. But anyone can become a victim. Those who are exercising in the heat are particularly susceptible. Therefore it is best to avoid strenuous exercise on hot days, or to take it indoors where there is air conditioning.

If you're on medication of any kind, ask your doctor if it could increase your risk of dehydration or decrease your ability to recognize when you're in danger. A number of medications could have these effects, including allergy medicines, diet pills, blood pressure medications, and antidepressants. There are also certain health problems that warrant added caution when exercising in the summer, so it's a good idea to discuss any workout plans with your doctor before you begin.

When deciding whether or not you should work out on any given day, check your local weather source for the heat index. This takes into consideration both heat and humidity. If it is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, it is advisable to be very careful not to overdo it. Postpone your workout if possible.

On any warm day, it's best to exercise early in the morning or late in the evening. At these times, it's usually not hot enough that exercising should pose a danger. Still, it is important to listen to your body. If you detect signs of heat exhaustion, stop and cool off.

One of the most important things you can do to prevent heat exhaustion is to stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water, and abstain from alcohol. This will ensure that you are better equipped to deal with the heat.

Getting the Kids Involved

In the summer, the kids are out of school. This provides a welcome opportunity for us to spend some quality time with them. Playing and exercising together allows us to connect with the kids while doing something that is good for both them and us.

Children usually have an abundance of energy, yet they sometimes prefer to play video games or watch television. Limiting these inactive pursuits and encouraging more physical activity is important. They might protest at first, but once they're outside having fun, they will forget all about it.

What should you do with the kids, you ask? Here are a few ideas:

- Play tag. Younger children love it, and it provides a great workout. Your child can probably teach you a million variations of the game, so it is unlikely to get boring.
- Find some flat objects to use for bases, and create a makeshift softball field in the back yard. Invite some other kids and parents over and have an impromptu game.
- Play basketball. It's one of the few sports that you can play with just two players or several, and it really keeps you moving.
- Go swimming. Kids love to play in the water, so they will usually need little encouragement to be active in the pool or lake.
- Set up an obstacle course. This is a good idea to keep on hand for when the kids say there's nothing to do. It provides a nice change of pace and the potential for a variety of exercises.
- Ride bicycles or go for a walk together. Older kids often enjoy these activities, and as a bonus, they give us an opportunity to talk with them and catch up on what's going on in their lives.

Safety is a major concern for children participating in physical activities. Be sure to outfit them with the proper equipment, such as bicycle helmets, knee and elbow pads, and anything else they need for particular sports. You'll also need to make sure they stay hydrated and wear sunscreen, and stay alert to signs of possible heat exhaustion.

Exercising With Your Pets

Pets are good exercise companions. Dogs in particular love to go on walks and hikes with their owners, or run alongside them as they ride their bikes. But it is important to remember that we are responsible for their health and well-being. A loyal pet will stick with his owner to the point of exhaustion.

Making sure that your pet has plenty of water before and after exercising is a must. They do not sweat, but they lose water by panting. It's also a good idea to take along some extra water for your pet when you work out.

It's also particularly important to exercise during cooler times of day when you're bringing a pet along. Some are more sensitive to heat than others, but most have at least a moderately thick fur coat that they can't remove when working out. Giving them the opportunity to rest in the shade during the hottest part of the day will ensure that they are feeling good enough in the morning or evening to keep pace with you.

Letting your four-legged friend go for a swim is a great way for him to cool off on hot days. If you can modify your route to go by a lake or stream, you could take a break and let him jump in when you get there. This will invigorate him and help keep him cool for the rest of the workout.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion in dogs may not be as noticeable as they are in humans, so it's crucial to know what to look for. The signs include:

- Hard and incessant panting

- Dark gums
- Feeling hot to the touch
- Elevated body temperature - In dogs and cats, 100 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit is normal. If rectal temperature is over 104 degrees, veterinary care is advisable.

Know When to Make Adjustments

When you're working out in the summer, it's important to be flexible. We're not talking about flexibility in your muscles (although that's a good thing too), but rather flexibility in your workout regimen. Sometimes it's in your best interest to make adjustments.

For instance, some days are hotter than others. If your only chance to exercise comes around at midday, that could mean a significant increase in temperature from one day to the next. And when you're working out in weather that is hotter than your body is accustomed to, it is easier to become dehydrated. So it's important to pace yourself and take in more fluids. Alternatively, you could find somewhere indoors to exercise.

If you're working out with others, it's also important to respect their limitations as well as your own. If you're in better shape, don't expect your workout buddy to keep up. And if she has been training much longer than you have, don't be afraid to lag behind a little. It's good to push yourself to a point, but overexertion in hot weather is just asking for trouble.

Also, if you're planning on trying a new activity, try to do it on a day when the temperature and humidity aren't extreme. You never know how a specific exercise will affect you until you try it, and giving it a go for the first time during stifling heat could be dangerous. If a given day is going to be your only chance to try something that you're anxious to do and the weather is hot, try to schedule it very early or very late to minimize the potential impact. Be sure to listen to your body's cues, and take a break or call it a day if you need to.

Events such as marathons and triathlons require a lot of training, and just getting in good enough shape to participate is quite an accomplishment. But some inexperienced athletes don't realize that they also need to get their bodies adjusted to the heat if they plan to participate during a potentially hot day. Working out indoors in the air conditioning just won't cut it. It's important to adjust to hot temperatures, and to do so gradually. Start out working out for 15 to 30 minutes in the heat, then increase it a little each day for a couple of weeks until you're doing your entire workout outside during the same time frame when the event will be held.

Summer Is the Season for Fun and Fitness

For kids and adults alike, summer is a season for recreation. School is on break, and it's the most popular time of year for vacation. The weather gets us in the mood to get out and get active, and that's why it's such a great time to work on getting fit.

Getting into shape doesn't have to cut into your summer fun. If you find activities that you enjoy, it can greatly enhance it. You can also spend more time with your kids or socialize with friends by convincing them to work out with you. So what are you waiting for? There's no time like the present to get started!

Last but not least, take a moment to look at what you and your family are eating. 3 healthy and well balanced meals are essential for your family's well being.

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